DEAR TEACHERS,

Our STUDY GUIDE is a resource for you to use both before and after you work with our teaching artists and visit our theatre. It’s packed full of information about Shakespeare, his language, and the play.

Feel free to photocopy pages for your students!

Want to know more about what’s happening behind the scenes and stay informed about the latest opportunities for your students? Members of our newest program for teens, CSC NextGen, regularly blog about their experiences working hands-on with our artists and staff, and about upcoming events especially for teens. All this and more can be found at cscnextgen.blogspot.com

You and your students can also like CSC NextGen on Facebook: @CSCNextGen

We love hearing from you, and welcome your feedback. We also encourage you to have your students write a review of ROMEO & JULIET and share it with us. We’d love to feature it!

EMAIL student reviews to: kathleen.dorman@classicstage.org

or MAIL it to us:
Classic Stage Company
ATTN: Kathleen Dorman
136 East 13th Street
New York, NY 10003

And now, without further ado, please enjoy ROMEO & JULIET!!

Sincerely,
Kathleen Dorman
Director of Education
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PART ONE:
SHAKESPEARE’S LIFE AND THEATRE
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE—AN ILLUSTRATED BIOGRAPHY

ILLUSTRATED BY DAVID HEATLEY

CLASSIC STAGE COMPANY • ROMEO & JULIET STUDY GUIDE • PAGE 4

WILLIAM IS BORN.

APRIL 23, 1564

WILLIAM MOVES TO LONDON AND BEGINS HIS THEATRICAL CAREER.

1582-1585

WILLIAM WRITES POETRY WHILE LONDON THEATRES ARE CLOSED DUE TO AN OUTBREAK OF THE PLAGUE.

1589-1591

WILLIAM'S ONLY SON, HAMNET, DIES AT THE AGE OF ELEVEN.

1594

WILLIAM'S ACTING COMPANY CHANGES THEIR NAME TO THE KING'S MEN.

1600-1606

WILLIAM WRITES HIS MOST FAMOUS TRAGEDIES.

"TIS UNMANLY GRIEVE..."

1603

WILLIAM WRITES HIS FINAL PLAYS AS A SOLO PLAYWRIGHT.

1609-1611

WILLIAM MOVES BACK TO HIS BIRTHPLACE, STRATFORD-UPON-AVON.

1612

EXACTLY 52 YEARS AFTER HIS BIRTH!

APRIL 23, 1616

WILLIAM DIES.

1623

WILLIAM'S PLAYS ARE PUBLISHED IN THE FIRST FOLIO.

1,000 COPIES PRINTED, 238 SURVIVE TODAY.
IN THE 16TH CENTURY, people believed in the “divine right of kings.” That is, that monarchs were given their right to rule directly from God, and they were subject to no earthly authority. When Henry VIII couldn’t get what he wanted from the heads of the Catholic Church—namely, a divorce from his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, who had not given him a male heir—he broke from the Church and declared himself the head of the new Anglican Church, which eventually became part of the Protestant Reformation. This was the beginning of a time of bitter religious disputes in England, full of assassination attempts.

BY THE TIME SHAKESPEARE WAS BORN, Queen Elizabeth—Henry VIII’s eldest daughter, born to his second wife, Anne Boleyn—was in power. Her 44 years on the throne provided the kingdom with more stability than the previous short-lived reigns of her two half-siblings, Edward VI and Mary, and paved the way for a thriving culture and a sense of national identity.

Kings and Queens and Religions, Oh My!

1534  Henry VIII breaks with the Catholic Church and declares himself head of the Anglican Church

1547  The Anglican Church becomes Protestant under Edward VI, Henry’s only son.

1553  Catholicism is restored under Mary, Henry’s daughter by his first wife, Catherine of Aragon; she earns the nickname “Bloody Mary” for having almost 290 Protestants burned at the stake.

1558  Elizabeth restores Protestantism; she has over 190 Catholics executed.

1603  James I continues harsh sanctions against non-conforming Catholics; a failed assassination attempt by the Catholics is known as the “Gunpowder Plot.”

All citizens of England were subject to the whims of the church and the monarchy at this time, but the theatre experienced a greater freedom, unknown to the previous generations. (For evidence of this, look no further than the numerous bawdy and pagan references found in Shakespeare’s plays!) This was partially because Queen Elizabeth herself was a patron of the theatre, and under the patronage of her successor, King James I, Shakespeare’s company of actors became known as “The King's Men,” an unprecedented honor at the time. Of course, this doesn’t mean it was a total free-for-all for playwrights like Shakespeare. Much of the subject matter of their plays reflected the sentiments of the sitting monarch, with positive portrayals of their ancestors and references to current politics that were sympathetic to the monarch’s cause. After all, there was no “freedom of speech” at this time, and the price of falling out of grace with the king or queen could very well be your life!
BOYS AND GIRLS began “petty school” around the age four to learn to read. Girls left school at age six to be taught at home by their mothers or, if they were rich, a private tutor. If their parents were middle class like Shakespeare’s, they could afford not to send their boys out to work, so the boys went on to a local grammar school to study Latin. It was essential to know this language in order to attend university to study things like law and medicine. Most boys hated school, with its long hours, dull lessons, and strict schoolmasters. Shakespeare acknowledges this in his famous “seven stages of man” speech in AS YOU LIKE IT when Jacques mentions the “whining schoolboy...creeping like snail, unwillingly to school.”

FOOTBALL—or soccer, as we know it—was a popular sport for people in the countryside around Shakespeare’s home town. The balls were made from inflated pigs’ bladders! Shakespeare makes mention of this sport in THE COMEDY OF ERRORS: “Am I so round with you as you with me, that like a football you do spurn me thus?” Other popular sports of the day Shakespeare mentions in his works include tennis, bowling, wrestling, rugby, billiards, and archery.

FESTIVALS occurred at various times of the year. One of the most popular was on May 1st—May Day, the celebration of the arrival of summer! Columns were erected (maypoles) and adorned with ribbons and flowers, traditionally as part of a dance. This tradition is referenced in A MIDSUMMER NIGHT’S DREAM: “They rose early to observe the rite of May.”

RIGHT: Children learned to read using a “hornbook” like this one—a piece of wood covered with printed paper, protected by a transparent sheet of horn.
**LONDON CITY LIVING**

**Filth, Fashion, and Fighting**

**IF YOU LIVED IN LONDON** during Shakespeare’s time, you would have encountered overly crowded streets, heaps of trash on the sidewalk, and the heads of executed criminals placed on poles for all to see. But amidst the grime, there were also beautiful churches and large mansions filled with nobles and wealthy merchants. Most items you needed would have been purchased from street vendors, including vegetables, fruits, toys, books and clothing.

**ABOVE:** Like New York City today, space was tight. Many buildings were designed with vertical living in mind, as London quickly became the epicenter of culture for England.

**SHAKESPEARE MOVED TO LONDON** to work in the theatre. But theatre wasn’t the only cultural event happening in London. You could also view bloody tournaments between animals, and public executions! Gambling was also popular.

**LEFT:** The first theatre was built in 1576. Its shape—like The Globe—was influenced by bear fighting-rings, which were popular in London at the time.
OUTBREAKS OF THE PLAGUE were common in Elizabethan London. Many Londoners believed the plague was caused by the various smells throughout the city, so they carried containers filled with herbs to combat the stench. What they didn’t know was that the plague was actually spread by fleas that lived on rats, which were rampant on the dirty streets.

In 1592, the plague forced London theatres to shut their doors for two whole years. 12,000 Londoners lost their lives. With no playhouses to produce his works, Shakespeare focused his attention on writing narrative poems and sonnets.

CLOTHING WAS A SIGN OF ONE’S RANK so there were strict rules dictating what citizens could and could not wear. Those dressing above their status could be arrested! Exceptions were made for actors as they often played nobles on stage.

LEFT: As a rule, the less practical the outfit, the higher the rank of its wearer. Wealthy men often wore hats with ostrich feathers for decoration, and huge “ruff” collars. Wealthy women wore wide padded dresses with puffy sleeves.

RIGHT: The less wealthy wore practical clothing conducive to labor. While the wealthy were wearing luxurious fabrics such as silk and velvet, the lower-status citizens often wore rough wool.
WELCOME TO THE GLOBE THEATRE

LET ME TELL YOU A LITTLE ABOUT "THIS WOODEN O."

THE COMPANY WAS HAVING DIFFICULTY RENEWING THE LEASE ON OUR FIRST THEATER, SO IN 1599 WE TOOK IT DOWN AND MOVED ITS TIMBERS ACROSS THE THAMES RIVER TO THE BANKSIDE AND BUILT THE GLOBE.

THE BANKSIDE IS GREAT—IT'S JUST OUTSIDE THE JURISDICTION OF THE CITY OF LONDON, SO WE'RE SAFE FROM CITY OFFICIALS WHO THINK THAT THE THEATER IS IMMORAL AND WANT TO ABOLISH IT.

THE ORIGINAL GLOBE BURNED DOWN IN 1613 WHEN CANNON FIRE—PART OF A PERFORMANCE OF HENRY VIII—ACCIDENTALLY SET THE THATCHED ROOF AFLAME! OOPS!

WE BUILT A SECOND, MORE ELABORATE GLOBE ON THE SAME SITE, AND IT REMAINED IN USE UNTIL CIVIL WAR BROKE OUT IN ENGLAND IN 1642.

THE FLAG IS FLYING! THAT MEANS WE'VE GOT A PERFORMANCE TODAY.

THE STAGE ROOF PROTECTS THE ACTORS FROM THE WEATHER, AND ALSO ACTS AS A SET PIECE WE CALL THE "HEAVENS." SEE THE STARRY SKY WE PAINTED?

THE BALCONY IS GREAT FOR WINDOW SCENES.

O ROMEO, ROMEO, WHEREFORE ART THOU ROMEO?

DID YOU KNOW JULIET WAS PLAYED BY A BOY? NO GIRLS ALLOWED!

THIS IS A "THRUST" STAGE, MEANING WE HAVE AUDIENCE MEMBERS ON THREE SIDES JUST LIKE AT CSC!

ALAS, POOR YORICK. I KNEW HIM...

THIS TRAP DOOR LEADS TO "HELL," THE SPACE BENEATH THE STAGE. IT MAKES A GREAT GRAVE, TOO!

MY TICKET COST TWICE AS MUCH AS WHAT THAT GENTLEMAN PAID FOR HIS CUSHIONED SEAT. I'M RIGHT ABOVE ALL THE ACTION! EVERYONE CAN SEE THAT I'M A VIP.

THE GLOBE CAN ACCOMMODATE NEARLY 3,000 AUDIENCE MEMBERS. CSC'S HOUSE ONLY SEATS ABOUT 200.

CHEAPEST SEAT IN THE HOUSE! WELL, IT'S NOT A SEAT, EXACTLY. AT LEAST I GET TO SEE THE SHOW!

THE "GROUNDLINGS" SOMETIMES THREW FRUIT AT THE ACTORS IF THEY DIDN'T LIKE A PERFORMANCE!
PART TWO:
THE PLAY
PLOT SYNOPSIS for **ROMEO & JULIET**

**Romeo, A Montague**

**Juliet, Lord Capulet’s Daughter**

**Tybalt, Juliet’s Cousin**

**Lord Capulet**

**His Cousin Benvolio**

**At a Costume Party at the Capulet House That Evening...**

**Late That Night in the Capulets’ Garden**

**They Make a Plan to Wed in Secret the Next Day**

**Returning Home from the Wedding, Romeo Encounters the Hot-Headed Tybalt Harassing His Best Friend, Mercutio...**

**Romeo Sends Word to Juliet Through Her Nurse**

**At Dawn, Romeo Races to Friar Laurence, Asking Him to Marry Them. Seeing the Potential to Absolve the Families’ Long-Standing Feud, the Friar Agrees to Help.**

**Parting Is Such Sweet Sorrow That I Shall Say Goodnight till It Be Morrow**

**Call Me But Love, and I’ll Be New Baptized. Henceforth I Never Will Be Romeo.**

**The Two Are Wed Later That Morning.**

**Signs: Rosaline Has Rejected My Love! Compare Her Face with Some That I Shall Show, and I Will Make Thee Think Thy Swan a Crow.**

**Lord Capulet Forbids Him to Fight in His House, Unintentionally Freeing Romeo to Woo Juliet.**

**I ne’er saw true beauty till this night.**

**‘Tis he, that villain Romeo! How dare a Montague crash our party!**

**O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo? Tis but thy name that is my enemy.**

**Come, what says Romeo? He you hence to Friar Laurence’ Cell. There stays a husband to make you a wife.**

**Boy, this shall not excuse the injuries that thou hast done me. Therefore turn and draw.**
Shamed by what he perceives to be his friend’s cowardice, Mercutio takes Romeo’s place in the duel.

No! Stop!

The Prince of Verona banishes Romeo upon hearing the news.

Let Romeo hence in haste, else, when he is found, that hour is his last.

A plague on both your houses! They have made worms’ meat of me.

O, I am fortune’s fool!

Thinking she grieves for Tybalt...

Gasp!!

Don’t worry. Later this week your faithful suitor Paris shall happily make thee a joyful bride.

Oh no!!! I must see the Friar.

Friar Laurence and Juliet hatch a plot to buy time so he can secure a pardon for Romeo...

Juliet returns home and agrees to the marriage... but the night before her wedding...

Romeo, I come! This do I drink to thee.

Potion that causes her to appear dead for forty-two hours.

According to the Friar’s plan, Romeo will rescue her at the vault, but the Friar’s letter to Romeo goes astray...

News from Verona! How fakes my Juliet?

Her body sleeps in Capel’s monument, and her immortal part with angels lives.

Is it even so? Then I defy you, stars!

He buys a vial of poison and goes to Juliet’s tomb...

Eyes, look your last! Arms, take your last embrace!

Here’s to my love! Thus with a kiss I die.

Moments later, Juliet awakens...

There rust, and let me die.

Arriving upon the tragic scene, their families vow to bury their strife along with their children.

A glooming peace this morning with it brings. For never was a story of more woe than this of Juliet and her Romeo.
NOTES ON THE PLAY

Fate and Tragic Timing
The tragic events of this play often seem like matters of bad timing. Romeo steps in front of Mercutio at the exact second that Tybalt lunges; the Friar’s explanatory letter to Romeo is delayed, so Balthazar’s misinformation reaches him first; Romeo drinks the poison mere moments before Juliet opens her eyes. These instances of close timing make the play even sadder than it otherwise would be, because we can see that the difference between life and death was just a few seconds. A moment earlier, or a moment later, and everything would have been okay. Individually, these moments of tragic timing look like awful accidents, but when taken all together, they seem more like the work of fate.

The theme of fate and foreboding turns up repeatedly in the play’s language. On the way to the Capulet ball, Romeo uneasily senses the approach of “Some consequence yet hanging in the stars”—he has a premonition of doom. After avenging Mercutio’s death by killing Tybalt, Romeo calls himself “fortune’s fool”—he feels that he has been cheated by fate. As the lovers part at daybreak, Juliet envisions Romeo “dead in the bottom of a tomb”, although she has no reason to think that he will soon die. When Romeo hears from Balthazar that Juliet has died, he shouts his defiance to the stars, demonstrating that he blames fate for the tragedy.

In the play’s prologue, Romeo and Juliet are called “star-crossed”, and their love is referred to as “death-marked”. These terms indicate that the lovers were destined to die tragically. But are the play’s events really the result of fate? Do you think that the teens from Verona were doomed from the start, or could this tragedy have been prevented? What factors stopped Romeo and Juliet from living happily ever after?

Warring Families, Warring Generations
The most obvious impediment to Romeo and Juliet’s love is the feud between their parents. The bad blood between the Capulets and the Montagues makes any romance between their heirs dangerous and forbidden. We know that the two families hold an “ancient grudge”—a hate so strong and deep-rooted that their servants fight in the streets. What the play doesn’t tell us is why this feud exists. What happened? Who started it? The audience isn’t given any of these details. It is as though the two households have been fighting for so long that they have forgotten why the fight started in the first place. This ambiguity makes the play’s feudal violence and eventual loss of life seem all the more unfair and pointless. Why should the young people of Verona kill each other over an argument begun by their ancestors? Why should two young people in love be kept apart because of a war that they had nothing to do with?

These questions point to another conflict in the play: that between youth and age. Romeo and Juliet are stuck in the midst of warring families, but they are also two young people forced to live under the rules and values of their parents’ generation. Romeo and Juliet’s love must be kept secret because it would not be understood or tolerated by the rest of society. Even the adults whom the teenagers trust for advice (Friar Laurence and the Nurse) don’t fully understand the intensity of their feelings. The adults of the play are weaker, slower, and less impassioned than their younger counterparts. Juliet comments that “old folks” are “unwieldy, slow, heavy”, and her dawdling Nurse exemplifies this behavior. In contrast, the young people of the play move fast and feel deeply. Their tempers ignite in an instant, and so do their feelings of love.
These Violent Delights Have Violent Ends: Youth, Love, and Violence

Romeo and Juliet fall deeply in love at first sight, and make plans to marry each other mere hours after they meet. This is a fast-moving relationship by any standards! Just like the violent encounters between the Capulets and the Montagues, their love fires up immediately. Although it seems incredibly romantic to fall for someone instantly, Friar Laurence warns Romeo that this kind of speed can be dangerous. He cautions him to “love moderately” and to act “wisely and slow”. Do you think that this advice is helpful, or does Friar Laurence just not understand what Romeo is going through? Does Friar Laurence actually do anything to try to slow down the young couple’s relationship, or does he ignore his own advice?

Later in the play, when Romeo and Juliet are faced with the prospect of a life without one another, their extreme love turns into extreme grief. Their intense feelings drive them to commit suicide. Do you believe that “violent delights” always “have violent ends”, and that people “who run fast” necessarily stumble? Are these intense emotions and extreme feelings an accurate representation of what it’s really like to be a teen? Have you ever felt like your love for someone else was the only thing in the world that mattered? Have you ever been so sad that you felt like things would never get better?

But soft, what light through younger window breaks?
Light and Darkness in ROMEO & JULIET

This play is filled with references to light and darkness. When we first hear about Romeo, he is described as shutting “fair daylight out” of his room, and making himself “an artificial night” in which to sulk about his unrequited love for Rosaline. Here, darkness is described as the ideal environment for a lover. Darkness continues to serve this role throughout the play, as Romeo and Juliet meet in the dark of night to conceal their relationship. They cannot parade their forbidden love around town in the light of day—instead, they must be together at nighttime, and Romeo must leave Juliet’s bedroom before the sun comes up.

But although Romeo and Juliet interact under the cover of “black-browed night”, their love is a source of metaphorical light. When Romeo first sees Juliet at the ball, he exclaims that she “doth teach the torches to burn bright”. He compares her to other shining sources of illumination: a rich jewel, stars, and the sun. Even when Juliet is lying entombed in the dark Capulet crypt, Romeo says that her presence creates “a feasting presence full of light”. Her beauty makes a grave look like “a lantern” to him.

This moment in the play emphasizes another theme traditionally associated with darkness: death. Think of the creepiest scenes you’ve read and seen in books and movies: lots of them are probably set in the dark. There’s a reason that people go trick-or-treating and watch scary films after the sun goes down—darkness can be scary! In this play, though, darkness is associated with death and with love—two themes that seem very different until we see how they are pulled together by the storyline. The cruel circumstances of Romeo and Juliet mean that for them, death is the only place that they can be together. While they are alive, they will be forced to be apart: Romeo banished to Mantua, and Juliet married to Paris. In Romeo and Juliet, Shakespeare deliberately weaves together themes of light and dark and day and night in ways which emphasize the play’s other opposing themes: life and death, love and hate.

Essays by Clara Rozee. Costume sketches by Clint Ramos.
QUIZ: WHO ARE YOU IN ROMEO & JULIET

1) THE PEOPLE IN YOUR LIFE WOULD DESCRIBE YOU AS:

A. Sweet and thoughtful.
B. The center of attention, and a little crazy.
C. Reserved and quiet, but deeply passionate within.
D. A worrier, always fretting about something.
E. Someone not to mess with.

2. IT’S FRIDAY NIGHT. YOU CAN BE FOUND:

A. Stuck in your room. Your parents keep you on a tight leash.
B. Cruising around town with a group of friends. Anyone know a good party to crash?
C. In a quiet place, alone with your thoughts. You’ve been thinking about your crush a lot lately, and your friends don’t understand how you feel.
D. Reading, gardening, and working on other private projects.
E. Settling a score with an enemy...nothing like a little revenge and intimidation to kick off the weekend.

3. WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IS YOUR BEST QUALITY?

A. Your imagination.
B. Your sense of humor.
C. Your capacity for love.
D. Your compassion.
E. Your fearlessness.

4. A FRIEND CALLS YOU UP, ASKING FOR A HUGE FAVOR. IF YOU HELP THEM, YOU’LL BE PUTTING YOURSELF IN HARM’S WAY. YOU:

A. Are surprised. Still, you agree to help - you can be pretty brave if you have to be.
B. Tease them for a while, but agree to help them out.
C. Reluctantly agree. You care about your friends, but you don’t want to get into trouble.
D. Create an elaborate plan to help your friend, complete with disguises and lies.
E. Sharpen your set of knives. Nobody messes with your friends.

5. IF YOU COULD CHANGE ONE THING ABOUT YOUR LIFE, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

A. It would be nice if your parents would let you make your own decisions.
B. You’d make sure your group of friends stayed together, no matter what.
C. All you want in the world is to be with the person you love!
D. You’re pretty content, actually. Doesn’t take too much to make you happy.
E. You’d want to see all of your enemies destroyed, one by one.

6. HOW DO YOU REACT WHEN YOU’RE IN A DIFFICULT SITUATION OR FIGHT WITH SOMEONE?

A. Appeal to their compassion, and beg them to see things your way - but if that doesn’t work, you might resort to desperate measures.
B. Taunt them; mess with their head; get under their skin.
C. You avoid conflict at all costs, but when you’re really worked up, you tend to act without considering the consequences.
D. You offer them a few wise words.
E. You never back down. Fighting is what you do best.

7. IF YOU COULD HAVE ONE SUPERHUMAN POWER OR ABILITY, WHICH WOULD YOU CHOOSE?

A. Telekinesis. It would be amazing to be able to communicate without words.
B. The ability to fly! Your friends would be so jealous...
C. Invisibility. Imagine being able to go wherever you wanted without anyone else knowing!
D. Precognition - being able to foresee the future.
E. You know how Darth Vader can choke people from a distance? That.

IF YOU ANSWERED MOSTLY:
A. You are JULIET
B. You are MERCUTIO
C. You are ROMEO
D. You are FRIAR LAURENCE
E. You are TYBALT
IS THIS REALLY WRITTEN IN ENGLISH? Yes, it is! But it’s also poetry. Elizabethans used poetry for the same reason we still use it today: to express heightened states of emotion. So the language may be more densely packed with all those great rhetorical devices you learned in English class—metaphors, alliteration, irony—but it’s definitely still English.

DID PEOPLE IN SHAKESPEARE’S DAY SPEAK IN VERSE? No, no more than we speak in rap today. But people both then and now enjoy the rhythm and rhyme of verse. It helps us tune in more immediately, more completely to the feelings and choices of the characters.

IS SHAKESPEARE HARDER FOR ACTORS TO PERFORM THAN REGULAR PLAYS? Actually, for most actors, Shakespeare is easier! The rhythm of the language makes it easy to memorize. (You know how song lyrics get stuck in your head, or how you can remember silly little rhymes from when you were a kid? It’s like that.) And all those rhetorical devices act as clues to tell the actors how their character feels.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, “CLUES”? At the start of the rehearsal process, actors do what’s called table work. They sit down with each other and with the director and talk about all the discoveries they’ve made while studying their scenes. They use this information to make choices as they move forward with rehearsals. Here are some of the “clues” they look for:

Shakespeare invented many words and phrases that we use on a regular basis today. Above are some examples.
Verse or Prose?
All of Shakespeare's language falls into one of two categories: verse or prose. Prose is what we think of as everyday speech, without specific rules regarding rhyme or rhythm. Verse, then, can be defined as giving order or form to the random stress patterns of prose.

A quick way to tell verse from prose: lines of verse begin with capital letters, while prose will appear in paragraph form.

Blank Verse
Blank Verse is the standard poetic form Shakespeare uses in his plays. It can also be defined as unrhymed iambic pentameter—that is, a line of poetry containing five (“penta” from the Greek prefix meaning five) iambic feet, not rhyming with any adjacent line. That’s ten syllables all together. The pattern flows easily for speakers of English, because the stresses match the human heart beat:

ta DUM, ta DUM, ta DUM, ta DUM, ta DUM

or, a good way to remember the word “iamb” is to think of it as:

i AM, i AM, i AM, i AM, i AM

If you say, “The Yankees and the Mets are New York’s teams” with natural inflection, you will have spoken a line of iambic pentameter.

The YANK | ees AND | the METS | are NEW | York’s TEAMS

Here are two more:

I TAKE | the SUB | way EV | ery DAY | to SCHOOL

I CAN’T | go OUT | be CAUSE | my HOME | work’s LATE

Now say a line from ROMEO & JULIET:

ROMEO
But soft! What light through yonder window breaks?

but SOFT | what LIGHT | through YON | der WIN | dow BREAKS

Prose
Prose is the everyday language used then and now. Since verse was the conventional method of writing in Elizabethan England, Shakespeare was actually pushing the literary boundaries by including prose in his plays.

At first glance, it may seem that Shakespeare used verse and prose to indicate a character’s status (rich, powerful, educated characters speak in verse; poor, common, fools speak in prose) but upon closer look, you’ll find that many characters go back and forth between verse and prose, and they do so at very specific moments in the play.

Actors pay close attention to when characters speak in verse and when they speak in prose because Shakespeare made these choices on purpose, and it can tell the actor a lot about how their character thinks and feels. For example, the Nurse is likely to speak in prose when she is teasing Juliet:

NURSE
Well, you have made a simple choice. You know not how to choose a man. Romeo? No, not he. Though his face be better than any man's, yet his leg excels all men's; and for a hand and a foot, and a body, though they be not to be talked on, yet they are past compare. He is not the flower of courtesy, but, I'll warrant him, as gentle as a lamb.
But she switches to verse when the conversation becomes more serious:

**NURSE**
Then hie you hence to Friar Laurence’ cell.  
There stays a husband to make you a wife.

---

The Nurse is not the only character in ROMEO & JULIET to speak in both verse and prose.  
What other characters do this, and why might they choose to do so?

---

**Irregular Verse**
Shakespeare doesn’t always write verse in perfect iambic pentameter. The rhythmic patterns change, and so do the number of syllables. This was pretty innovative stuff in Shakespeare’s day. He was one of the first writers to break form. Just like a change from prose to verse is a clue for the actor, so is a variation in the verse pattern.

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**Feminine Endings**
A “feminine ending” is a line of verse that ends with an unstressed extra syllable. The result is that the rhythm of the verse is thrown off just enough to indicate that the characters feel unsettled about something. Here’s an example, spoken by Juliet when she finds out that she must marry Paris:

**JULIET**
O God – O Nurse, how shall this be prevented?  
My husband is on earth, my faith in heaven.

They scan as:

- o GOD | o NURSE | how SHALL | this BE | pre VENT | ed  
- my HUS | band IS | on EARTH | my FAITH | in HEA | ven

---

**Shared Lines & Split Lines**
Shakespeare sometimes splits a line of verse, so that two characters share the ten syllables. This is called a shared line or a split line, and it helps to show quick thinking or strong emotion, as well as creating a sense of accelerated action. Thus we have both the effect of poetry AND of natural speech.

Have a look at these lines shared by Romeo and his good friend, Mercutio:

**ROMEO**
I dreamt a dream tonight.

**MERCUTIO**
and so did I.

**ROMEO**
Well, what was yours?

**MERCUTIO**
That dreamers often lie.

They scan as:

- i DREAMT | a DREAM | to NIGHT | and SO | did I  
- well WHAT | was YOURS | that DREAM | ers OFT | en LIE

Four short, simplistic sentences becomes a rhyming couplet. The actors playing these roles can discover a lot about their characters’ relationship from an exchange like this one!

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A rhyming couplet is a pair of lines of the same length whose end words rhyme. Shakespeare often uses these to signal the end of a scene, or to foreshadow something yet to come. Where do you see these techniques at work in ROMEO & JULIET?
Rhyme
Even though most of Shakespeare’s plays are written in blank verse, he still makes frequent use of rhyme – especially when he wants to call your attention to something. Words that rhyme really stand out when we hear them spoken aloud, so these words are of particular importance to the actors.

In ROMEO & JULIET, you will notice rhyme everywhere – but not always where you might expect it. Sure, it’s there when people are in love:

ROMEO
Did my heart love till now? Forswear it, sight!
For I ne’er saw true beauty till this night.

But it’s also there for an entire scene (Act 2 Scene 3, between Friar Laurence and Romeo) and there’s even a hidden sonnet (Act 1 Scene 5, when Romeo and Juliet speak for the first time)!

Try speaking a speech or a scene with lots of rhyme out loud. Why do you think Shakespeare chose to use so much rhyme in this play? What can that tell the actors, and how might it affect their performance? How might it affect the audience? Where do we still see rhyme in use today, and does it have the same effect?

Rhetorical Devices
A rhetorical device is a technique that an author or speaker uses to have an effect on its audience. They go beyond the literal meaning of the words, making use of the sounds and the imagery to create imaginative new ways for an audience to connect with the author’s ideas. Shakespeare would have studied and known how to make use of a very, very long list of rhetorical device – but the more common examples are things that you’ve probably encountered in English class, such as metaphor, simile, and alliteration.

Antithesis
One rhetorical device that appears frequently in ROMEO & JULIET is antithesis – a contrast of ideas or words, typically balanced or parallel in how they are constructed within a phrase. Take for example Romeo’s reaction to the brawl that opens the play:

ROMEO
Here’s much to do with hate, but more with love.
Why then, O brawling love, O loving hate,
O anything of nothing first create,
O heavy lightness, serious vanity,
Misshapen chaos of well-seeming forms,
Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health,
Still waking sleep that is not what it is.
This love feel I that feel no love in this.

Love v. hate isn’t the only antithetical theme in ROMEO & JULIET - there’s also light v. dark, and life v. death. What can all of these extreme contrasts tell you about the world of the play and the people who inhabit it?
WHAT TO WATCH FOR...
Questions and themes to consider

Generational Differences
How are the adults of the play set apart from the young people? Pay attention to the opening scene, when Capulet and Montague confront each other. How is their behavior different from the rage of Tybalt, or the servants? In Act II, Juliet says that “old folks” are “unwieldy, slow, heavy, and pale as lead”. Where do you see evidence for this in the play?

Family Feud
How does this particular production depict the Capulet/Montague feud? Are the two families distinguished from one another, and if so, how? Where and when might this version of Verona be situated? Do you think that these directorial decisions are effective?

Humor in the Play
Many scholars have commented that Romeo and Juliet seems like it could be a comedy up until Act III Scene 1, when Mercutio is killed. It is certainly true that the first half of this play has many opportunities for humor. Which scene or character did you find the funniest, and why? Why do you think that Shakespeare included funny moments in his tragedy?

Fate and Death
Were Romeo and Juliet really “star-crossed” and fated to die, or could their deaths have been prevented? Do you think that their loss will be a wake up call to their families, and end the violence, or did they die entirely in vain?

Trusted Adults
What do you think of the actions of Friar Laurence and the Nurse, Romeo and Juliet’s closest advisors? Were they more hurtful, or more helpful to the young couple? What could they have done differently to help? Do they deserve any blame for what happened?

Love and Poetry
Listen closely to the play’s love scenes: when Romeo and Juliet meet at the ball, declare their love on the balcony, and part at daybreak. Is their love for one another reflected in the way they use language? Can you tell that they are attracted to one another by how they speak?
PART THREE: STUDENT RESOURCES
New York City Students! Interested in theatre? There are amazing and FREE programs all over the city you can participate in, including a new one at CSC called NextGen. Student rush tickets are available to most Broadway and Off-Broadway shows, and at many theaters if you volunteer to usher for a show you can see it for free! There are also after-school programs, playwriting competitions, classes, and more. Check it out!

CSC NextGen
www.classicstage.org/education/students/nextgen
Here at CSC, we focus on plays from the past, but we know it’s important to keep a clear eye on the future. YOU are the next generation of artists and audiences, and we want to work with YOU! As a CSC NextGen member, you’ll see plays, meet artists, go behind the scenes, learn new skills in the theatre, and plan and lead special events for your peers (like our newest event for teens, the Shakespeare Smackdown, aka SHAKE SMACK)—all for free! Interested students should plan to submit application materials in May 2014 for the 2014/2015 Season. Questions? Contact our Director of Education, Kathleen Dorman, at kathleen.dorman@classicstage.org or 212-677-4210 x21.

BAM (Brooklyn Academy of Music)
www.BAM.org
Free after-school programs Young Critics, Young Film Critics, Dancing Into the Future, and Arts & Justice offer opportunities for extended engagement in the arts. All programs are tailored to meet city and state learning standards as part of BAM Education’s continuing mission to support the integration of the arts into the school curriculum.

CAT Youth Theatre
www.creativeartsteam.org/programs/cat-youth-theatre
CAT Youth Theatre is a free, award-winning after school program for NYC middle and high school students to create original theatre. Members meet weekly, from September through May, to explore their ideas and creativity and build their skills through theatre games and exercises, improvisations and scene work, rehearsal, critical reflection, and group discussion. Each spring, the CAT Youth Theatre company (young people in high school) presents a full production of an original work in a professional venue. Twice a year, the Junior Youth Theatre company (young people in middle school) presents sharings of original work at the CAT studio.

Henry Street Settlement: Urban Youth Theatre
http://www.henrystreet.org
The Urban Youth Theater (UYT) is the Abrons Arts Center’s resident acting company for teenagers. Each year the company performs an exciting season of new plays and classics under the direction of professional directors and designers. Rehearsals and special workshops take place during Production Labs. Henry Street Settlement also offers a broad range of programs in other artistic disciplines.

The Juilliard School
www.juilliard.edu
Juilliard’s Pre-College Division offers a thorough and comprehensive program of music instruction for talented young people who show the potential to pursue a professional career in music. It meets on Saturdays for 30 weeks between September and May. The Pre-College Division accepts students on the basis of a performance audition, which is heard by the faculty of the student’s chosen major. Acceptance is based on artistic and technical merit, as well as the number of available openings in each department.

Looking for Shakespeare
www.steinhardt.nyu.edu/music/edtheatre/programs/summer/shakespeare
High school students work with a director and graduate students from NYU to shape an original production of Shakespeare. This program is unique in that the ensemble members will work with a director and a dramaturg to discover how a Shakespearean play resonates for them within their own personal experiences. Using these connections as a source of inspiration, students and ensemble members rehearse and perform their own vision of the play. The production will be supported by designers and stage managers and will be documented by a video artist. This program runs for four weeks—June 27th through July 21th—FIVE DAYS A WEEK, from 9:00am-3:00pm. Lunch is provided everyday. The experience will culminate in three public performances. Deadline April 1st 2013.

Manhattan Theatre Club
http://www.manhattantheatreclub.com/education/education-overview
Family Matinee: Students bring an adult of their choice to a Saturday-morning workshop focusing on the MTC production they attend in the afternoon. This free program promotes family theatre going and intergenerational dialogue. To join the Family Matinee mailing list, please e-mail ed@mtc-nyc.org or call 212.399.3000 x4251

Write Now!: Highly motivated high school students learn about the art and craft of playwriting. In weekly after-school sessions conducted by master playwrights, participants develop plays by bringing in successive drafts for critique by leaders of the group. The program culminates in a reading of the participants’ work performed by professional actors for an audience of family and friends. This nine-week program runs October to December, and February to May.
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MCC
www.mcctheater.org/youthcompany/index.html
The MCC Theater Youth Company is a free, after-school program for New York City high school students interested in developing their acting and dramatic writing skills. Acting Lab students meet every Tuesday to develop skills in voice, movement, monologue and dialogue. Playwriting Lab students meet every Monday with professional playwright Lucy Thurber to develop skills in dramatic writing. The year culminates with the annual productions of UnCensored and The Fresh Play Festival. Veteran Youth Company members also have the opportunity to work with distinguished professionals in master classes.

The Metropolitan Opera
www.metoperafamily.org/metopera
The Metropolitan Opera and the Metropolitan Opera Guild are committed to finding and fostering the next generation of opera lovers through vital programs in schools and communities across the country and advancing the role of opera in education. Under Education tab: Opera-specific classroom guides that include full-length classroom activities, musical highlights, story synopses and more. Also available are student discounts for opera tickets.

New York Public Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center
www.nypl.org/locations/lpa
The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts houses one of the world’s most extensive combinations of circulating, reference, and rare archival collections in its field. These materials are available free of charge, along with a wide range of special programs, including exhibitions, seminars, and performances. An essential resource for everyone with an interest in the arts—whether professional or amateur—the Library is known particularly for its prodigious collections of non-book materials such as historic recordings, videotapes, autograph manuscripts, correspondence, sheet music, stage designs, press clippings, programs, posters and photographs.

New York Theatre Workshop: Mind the Gap
www.nytw.org/education.asp
Mind the Gap is a free workshop with half of the participants aged 60+ and the other half teenagers. Through the course of the workshop, participants work in pairs to interview each other and create a theatre piece based on their partner’s personal stories. Each session culminates with an invited presentation in which professional actors read participant’s work.

Playbill
www.playbill.com
This comprehensive website features information on all Broadway and Off-Broadway shows (and information on student rush), news updates, cast interviews and job listings.

The Possibility Project
www.the-possibility-project.org/get-involved/join-the-project
The Possibility Project brings together vastly diverse groups of teenagers who meet weekly for a year. Through a combination of issue-oriented discussions, trainings in diversity, leadership and community activism, instruction in the full range of performing arts the youth cast writes, produces and performs an original musical based on their lives and their ideas for change. In addition, they design and lead community action projects on issues of concern to them in order to take their creative vision for change into the world.

Public Theater’s Shakespeare Initiative
www.publictheater.org
The Public Theater’s Shakespeare Initiative offers a number of programs for young Shakespeareans throughout the year. From Shakespeare Spring Break to A Midsummer Day’s Camp, young actors have an opportunity to learn about the challenges and joys of performing Shakespeare from some of the best teaching artists in New York City.

Stella Adler Studio of Acting Outreach Division
www.stellaadler.com/outreach
The Stella Adler Outreach Division provides free actor training to low-income inner-city youth. Outreach aims to empower young people through craft. This includes: 1) Adler Youth—a one year after-school acting program with an optional second year, and 2) Summer Shakespeare—a five-week summer training program that culminates with a public performance.

Theatre Development Fund/TKTS
www.tdf.org/pxp
TDF builds audiences for tomorrow with programs for today’s teenagers—from budding playwrights to students who have never even attended a play. What are teens saying about theatre—and how can you get involved? Find the answers, and much more, in Play by Play, a glossy magazine featuring student written reviews, profiles and interviews, as well as listings of shows students can see for $25 or less. Play by Play is distributed free in virtually all NYC high schools and all NYC public libraries. TDF also prepares a Teachers Guide to accompany every issue, with exercises and tips on how to get the most out of Play by Play in the classroom.

Young Playwrights Inc.
www.youngplaywrights.org
Stephen Sondheim founded Young Playwrights Inc. to encourage and cultivate young playwrights in New York City. Students 18 and under can submit original work to their annual playwriting competitions. The New York City Playwriting Competition is open to all NYC students. Plays are judged in three categories: elementary, middle, and high school. All entrants receive a Certificate of Achievement, a written evaluation of the play, and an invitation to the annual Awards Ceremony.
Classic Stage Company (CSC) is the award-winning Off-Broadway theatre committed to re-imagining the classical repertory for contemporary audiences. Founded in 1967, CSC uses works of the past as a way to engage in the issues of today. Highly respected and widely regarded as a major force in American theatre, it has become the home to New York’s finest established and emerging artists, the place where they gather to grapple with the great works of the world’s repertory from Sophocles to Sondheim.